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Climate Change Scepticism: A Transnational Ecocritical Analysis

Greg Garrard, Axel Goodbody, George B. Handley, and Stephanie Posthumus, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 297 pp. Available through Bloomsbury Open Access.

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"If I hear one more milksop discussing the environment and calling it 'the ecology,' honestly, Dellarobia. I might break a mettler balance on his head."
(*Flight Behavior*, Barbara Kingsolver, 2012)

> Stop! From October 1st, if you say "Whatever happened to global warming, eh?" whenever it's a bit cold or wet, you could be cooling off in a prison cell. This leaflet is being sent to every household in Britain. You have until September 30th to learn the difference between climate, a long-term term (*sic*) trend averaged over many years, and weather, which is what's going on outside the window right now.
>
> (*The Armstrong and Miller Show*, 2010; cited in Garrard 53)

Easter, 15 April 2019: international protests initiated by Extinction Rebellion take place in 80 countries all demanding governments declare a climate emergency and reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 (Buckley et al. *Daily*

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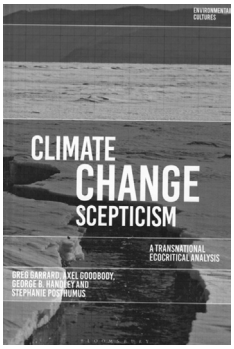
Mail 20 April 2019, p. 13). The London group, led by molecular biophysicist, Gail Bradbrook, and former Ph.D. student, Roger Hallam, face jail after staging live-ins on bridges, "die-ins" (one beneath the signifier-rich gaze of dinosaurs) at the Museum of Natural History, and several "stuck-ons" where superglued bodies attach themselves to property, including to the fence of then Labour MP, Jeremy Corbyn.



Amid so much global grassroots engagement, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the recent publication *Climate Change Scepticism: A Transnational Ecocritical Analysis* (available on Open Access) has missed the boat. It's a fact the authors admit to, given that "now there seems to be a real change in the air" (Garrard et al. Intro. *CCS* 2). Optimism brims over: the annual rate of increase globally of CO2 emissions was around 4% in the first decade of this century, but the rate of increase fell to 0.5% globally in 2014 (2). Happy news indeed, but the authors note that "[c]onservative and neo-fascist populism has hit a high tide mark across Europe and the United States . . . . in the figure of President Donald Trump" (2).

And there we have it, in a figurative nutshell, the contextual difference between the book's publication in 2019, and how things now stand. There is no flag-waving Greta Thunberg "leading the people;" there is no Covid-19 to stop such gatherings; there is no Trump, opting out of the Paris Agreement (COP 21)[1], but what there is, are thirty-two countries declaring a climate emergency, and New Zealand promising that its public sector will be carbon-neutral by 2025 (Taylor, *The Guardian* 2 Dec. 2020). Unfortunately, there's Australia, holding up its "international reputation as a climate change laggard" (Kelly and Lane, *The New Daily* 13 Dec. 2020), with Prime Minister, Scott Morrison,

[1] The twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. COP21 took place in Paris.

"snubbed" for "lacking ambition" at the United Nations Climate Ambition Summit. Nevertheless, the disparate socio-political factors of the past year highlight rather than undermine the literature under investigation in *Climate Change Scepticism* (*CCS*).[2] Here, four authors set themselves a laudable task, which is "to *understand* climate scepticism, not to vilify or even overcome it" (3 original emphasis). In this "first ecocritical study to examine the cultures and rhetorics of climate scepticism," climate skeptics are approached through their texts rather than through an *ad hominem* argument about stereotypical collectives of wrong-thinkers—a portrayal thrashed out in the Introduction based on research predominantly by social scientists. The socio-political, and historical backgrounds provided in the chapters (featuring literature from the UK, US, Germany, and France) confirm the influence of social identity on the debate. Stephanie Posthumus investigates how "Frenchness" informs the climate skeptics' view, a defensible approach especially as "the French public is more convinced by the science of climate change and the need to do something about it than in the UK and the USA" (Nothias and Painter 89, qtd. in *CCS* 184). Conversely, George Handley comments that "conservative Christians show the highest rates of climate scepticism in the United States" (*CCS* 137). We might ask, "Why?"

Skeptical Brits, Stereotypes, and Warmists, pp. 41-90

Greg Garrard begins his enquiry into UK skepticism by hanging his chapter "Climate Scepticism in the UK" on three political hooks: first, the Back to Nature movement of the 1880s, with Wordsworthian Romanticism situated alongside satirical detractors Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde; second, the Clean Air Act of 1956, necessitated by smoke pollution, labelled in a 19th century version of Fake News as "benign or even beneficial" (48); and third, the links between Margaret Thatcher's 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, and the First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in 1990.

"Smoke abatement" links the events, with Industrial-era writers Charles Dickens and John Ruskin reconceptualizing nature as more than a commodity. The Bryant and May "matchgirls strike" of 1888 is heralded as possibly "the first gesture of environmental justice activism in British political history" (45), and

[2] The spelling "scepticism" is used when citing directly from the publication; otherwise, the US form "skepticism" is used.

William Morris's pastoral utopia, *News from Nowhere* (1890), is acknowledged as an early manifestation of UK green politics. The third hook—the Thatcher era to IPCC 1990—splendidly captures the relationship between economics and the environment when the Iron Lady clashed with the Mineworkers' Union in the 1980s: the closure of the pits resulted in the environmental plus of clearer skies. Thatcher, who was called the "most significant impediment to the 'greening' of British politics" (50), demonstrated a political corrective in her 1988 speech to the Royal Society, declaring "we have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself" (50). For Garrard, it is the 2008 Climate Change Act (CCA) under Gordon Brown that remains "an accomplishment of British environmentalism" with its legal duty to reduce carbon emissions by 80% lower than the 1990 baseline (57).

Hold that thought. For the CCA under Brown is the moment when the "thin hegemony" of climate agreement in the UK is punctured. Although predating the CCA, John Gray's anti-human *Straw Dogs* (2002) sets the scene for the fatalistic "response sceptic"—one who doesn't doubt the climate science but does doubt that human nature is capable of responding to climate change with anything but unconcern (34, 67). Elsewhere, Gray has said that "[t]he earth is suffering from disseminated primatemaia—a plague of people" and many of those are "homo rapiens" (*Heresies* 2004). Which would appear to make the CCA with its "legal duty to reduce carbon emissions" necessary, considering the lack of faith in human agency described by writers such as Gray. Furthermore, the sceptic has feasted on fake news: the fraudulent banking practices that resulted in the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, and "Climategate," the 2009 hacking of emails at the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit. The University's emails revealed a misuse of "objective" scientific peer reviews in reports written for the UN's IPCC. The knock-on effect was the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen conference, the rise of distrust and skepticism, and the scientific community's admission of uncertainty in climate data. The impact of these particular issues is evident in each of the book's chapters.

In order to encourage discussion between climate change believers and skeptics, rather than to vilify, the authors caution that stereotyping harms clear thinking and negotiation (Intro. 17). They borrow the skeptics' term for a climate change believer—warmist—and in turn, advise against calling a climate skeptic a "denier," which is regarded as inflammatory, recalling the baggage associated with "Holocaust denier" (21). The authors admit that predictable portrayals of skeptics do appear in academic literature, portrayals of "angry conservative white men, middle-aged or older, whose ideas are derived from a small number of conservative think tanks funded by fossil fuel interests" (26).

Which (while not wishing to engage in stereotypes) leads neatly to Jeremy Clarkson, a UK "attribution sceptic," one who questions the attributed source of climate change. Here is a white, middle-aged man with a penchant for fossil fuel, previously co-presenter of TV's car program, *Top Gear*, and columnist for *The Sun*. This "hairy-chested" sceptic (Hamilton qtd. in Garrard 21) is deemed to be "arguably the most influential climate sceptic in the world" (69). Garrard finds Clarkson "inimitable," his comic posturing providing space for questioning, accepting, rejecting. He's less forgiving with James Delingpole, who argues in *Watermelon* (2011), "that the field of climatology, the whole IPCC and the UN COP process have been hijacked *in toto* by socialists whose sole interest is the destruction of capitalism . . . " (73). (Titled "Watermelon" because it is green on the outside, and red on the inside.) Delingpole, executive editor for Alt-right Breitbart, London, is accused of "moral dualism" (74) by Garrard, who admits that the work of this climate sceptic has "done little to dislodge the popular stereotype" (75).

But there are subversive influences of concern to literary theorists. Influences such as the power of the narrative, which shapes "the world in terms of stories." So writes Christopher Booker in *The Real Global Warming Disaster* (2009). Just so, it's a truism of modern literary culture, says Garrard, returning to George Marshall's *Don't Even Think about It*, who introduces another type of skeptic borne from the "psychological evidence that people will hang on to a compelling story even in the face of directly contradictory factual evidence" (80). Garrard recommends Booker's *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (2004) be read alongside Richard Bean's play *The Heretic* (2011), which he describes as the "funniest and most technically accomplished sceptical text in the British canon" (81). Peter Taylor's *Chill: A Reassessment of Global Warming Theory* (2009) is the most heterodox of texts: eco-feminist, green, and empirical. Music to non-skeptical ears but ignored by skeptics *and* warmists. Taylor's climate skepticism unsettles and chills the environmentalist: zero fossil fuel emissions at present-day usage requires "52 new onshore wind farms, 100 urban waste incinerators, 40 nuclear power stations and 2,700 square kilometres of solar power sited in North Africa" (David Mackay, Department of Energy and Climate Change, qtd. in CCS 88).

France: Doubt as a Social Indicator, pp. 175-205

The author of *Climato-scepticisme*, Stephanie Posthumus, cautiously sug-

gests that skepticism—doubt—is a culturally embedded characteristic of the French and even if it isn't, she is interested to know how climate skeptics might be influenced by their idea of Frenchness. One of France's most prominent skeptics, the geochemist Claude Allègre, commented: "Did not a famous Frenchman—René Descartes—invent the method of doubt?" (*CCS* 176). Doubting Thomas aside, Posthumus argues that Descartes's use of doubt as philosophical method, combined with rationalism and dualism (176)—provides an insight into how the French might feel duty-bound to question (doubt) everything, including climate science.

As for French values historically attributed to the natural world, two canonical authors represent the nature / culture dualism. Speaking on behalf of "nature" is Romantic Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778); opposing him, his former teacher, rationalist (and a good deal wittier) Voltaire (1694-1778). In the living world, however, French climate skeptics are neither left nor right. As Michael Bess writes, "France has developed a shallower, but wider, environmentalism" (178), calling it "light-green" because it embraces images of rolling farmland as well as new technologies, including nuclear power and Concorde. (Though it's worth noting that Concorde was an Anglo-French project.)

The autocratic period of a previous France wore the face of de Gaulle. The student-led May 1968 civil unrest set social emancipation in motion, lending impetus for later environmental protests. One such was at Larzac. Farmers confronted the Pompidou government in 1971 when it proposed expanding its military base by expropriating the Larzac farmlands of *le petit paysan*. Winning the day in 1981, the victory remains an inspiration for French cross-party eco-movements. Posthumus comments though, that 1992—a decade later—marks the height of anti-ecological sentiment (203). Following the publication of *The New Ecological Order*; its author, Luc Ferry, attacked the "fascist tendencies" of ecological thinking, arguing that "humans must detach themselves from nature if they are to gain access to the arts, culture, beauty and ethics" (Posthumus 181). So negatively did Ferry's high-culture "Frenchness" impact on the development of *éco-pensée*, says Posthumus, that it pushed its reception back and condemned Literature Departments to the (interminable) theorists. Meanwhile, volcanologist Vincent Courtillot, and his four (not as stated, one) co-authors claimed solar cycles drove climate change. In 2007, Courtillot (an attribution skeptic: one who questions the causes attributed to climate change) was invited to "the sacred halls of the *Académie des sciences*" to defend his article. Posthumus makes an important distinction between French climate skepticism, where it appears at "the very heart" of the scientific institution, as opposed to the economic concerns of the United States, where climate science is "driven by conservative

think tanks funded by multi-national oil companies" (185).

Courtillot appears before the *Académie*, the term *climato-scepticisme* appears in newspapers, Allègre's premise of "totalitarian ecology" is published as *The Climate Imposture* (2010). He warns of a global body of technocrats making decisions for citizens based "only" on saving the planet (Allègre 264 qtd. in Posthumus 194). Courtillot, Allègre, and Ferry are distinguished scientists but, as Posthumus points out, none are climate scientists. When Allègre suffers a heart attack, the climate skeptic momentum slows, and a general critique of ecological catastrophism takes its place (187). Climatologist Jean Jouzel (cited as "former vice-president of the IPCC in the early 1990s" (189), although his biography lists him as Vice Chair from 2002-2015) warns of great human suffering and of "no other possible solutions" (189). Jouzel's anxiety discourse prompts the digital generation to turn to humor, utilizing social media for their satirical, (anti) anti-ecologist messages ("Monsanto as President!" and "Save the Stock Exchange, not the bears!"). They represent "joyful ecological awareness," a way of weakening the "authoritative, institutionalized" arguments of climate skeptics and warmists (190). Even President Macron took to satire, proclaiming "Make Our Planet Great Again" (vis-à-vis Trump).

Posthumus cites the delicious scam by physicist Alan Sokal who, concerned with the sophistry of warmists and the non-scientific academic community, published a peer-reviewed article in *Social Text* (1996) composed of terms strung together from quantum physics. His sting against postmodern cultural studies, literary scholars, and philosophers continued in his and Jean Bricmont's *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (1997). They reprimanded theorists of the last seventy years—Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Bruno Latour—for using concepts from "pure sciences" without real understanding (Posthumus 193). Stéphane Foucart responded, claiming it's too late to protect capital "'S' Science" from disciplinary cross-contamination; that had already happened when the Nobel Peace Prize was given to the IPCC (195). Philosopher Michael Serres rebutted similarly in *The Natural Contract* (1990), arguing that the trial of Galileo meant science was already entwined with law and therefore with social judicial processes.

Posthumus divides climate change literature into eco-thrillers, eco-farces, and science fiction. The genre for environmental issues (as opposed to climate change) is the eco-thriller. Jean-Christophe's *Adam's Perfume* (2007) is concerned with militant ecological orders and biological warfare as a means of exterminating the world's underclass. Writing on the topic of climate change, Philippe Vasset's *The Diary of a (Female) Predator* (2010) comes recommended. Vasset targets capitalism's stranglehold on the planet, where environmentalists too are

driven by greed. Composed of imagined and real events, memos, no descriptive passages, and with climate change as the plot device, Vasset is credited with inventing a form that "mirrors the effects of advanced capitalism on human behaviour" (201).

Climate change eco-farce includes Augustin Guilbert-Billetdoux's *The Bald People's Messiah* (2012), and Joël Baqué's *Melting Ice* (2017). Baqué's eco-farce comes recommended by Posthumus, recounting a widower's emotional tie to a stuffed penguin. For those who favor a particular wildlife animal currently heading for extinction, Baqué forces the realization that climate change "is not all about us."

For a serious take on climate change, science fiction is the go-to genre. Yann Quero's futuristic *The Trial of the White Man* (2005) takes place in the "Republic of Singapore," and explores the benefit, or fascist outcomes, of following ecological orders. Quero's *The Future Will Not Be What It Was* (2010) imagines spaceships coming to warn about climate change. Humans suspect aliens of wanting to sterilize them. Although indirectly related to sexual activity (sterilization does not inhibit performance), this novel encourages an environmental critique of the human obsession with priapism and the use of rare, other-than-human body parts as phallocentric props.

Posthumus's chapter concludes with *Climate Changed: A Personal Journey through the Science* (2014), a graphic novel by Philippe Squarzoni, endorsed by Jean Jouzel. No surprises that the anxiety discourse of the response skeptic is realized in the final-moment transformation of docile humans into active agents only when "Forced by circumstances. And way too late" (Squarzoni 455 qtd. in Posthumus 202).

Germany: The Shadow of History and the Post-Normal, pp. 91-131

"*Klimaskepsis* in Germany"—whether skepticism of anthropogenic global warming (human caused), or of climate protection measures (such as decarbonization)—appear better informed and less pessimistic than UK skeptics. Better informed perhaps because the green norm of Germany's "cultural tradition" demands respectful attention to the empiricism of the wider population. Author Axel Goodbody attributes the origins of strong public support for environmental policies to cultural tradition and national identity (92), even citing Tacitus's description of Teutonic tribes as forest dwellers. The writings of nature poets Goethe and Schiller (92) attest to Germany's strong Romantic tra-

dition.

As Goodbody points out, the Nazi's Blood and Soil ideology, however, tainted the ideation associated with forest romanticism, rurality, and animal rights. Post-war reframing of the national identity resulted in a brand of environmentalism that "has effectively become a 'national code of conduct' (*Umweltkultur*)" (93). Goodbody cites academic Frank Uekötter's *The Greenest Nation?* (2014) noting that this perspective makes it tough for people to *not* be green. Nice going, you'd think.

But some skeptics, historically wary of authoritarianism, oppose government intervention ("eco-dictatorship" (110)) on climate policy. They oppose attempts at "ideological alignment of public opinion" (a Third Reich term (111)) that alienates "freedom of choice." Addressing pro-government media star Stefan Rahmstorf's accusation that skeptics were misleading the public, their rebuttal was fulsome. As Goodbody writes, climate catastrophe was seen as a "secular religion" played out in a "grand narrative of guilt" where government policy added to the "catastrophilia which plagued the nation" (111). The rebuttalists "asserted their right to doubt" (111).

So where is the "strong public support for environmental policies" previously alluded to? Goodbody examines the political, social, cultural, and environmental complexities associated with climate change, for it isn't just history's overarching shadow that prompts skepticism concerning government actions on climate: there is the matter of scientific uncertainty, along with the tendency to distort and exaggerate risks (128). Goodbody traces "critical interventions in environmental debates" (97) to the 1970s and 1980s—when the German Environmental movement became successful. Environmental catastrophism, commonplace in the work of writers, provoked alarmist behavior, underpinned by local, real-world scientific error. The first "eco-error" example Goodbody cites is the 1970s *Waldsterben* (forest dieback), which struck at the heart of Tacitus's forest dwellers. Confirming acid rain to be human-caused, scientists reported "that the nation's forests would suffer total decimation within a generation" (98). It didn't. And the five-year flurry around *Waldsterben* was later termed an "eco-error," providing nascent skeptics with more fodder to gnaw on.

The second "eco-error" involved the 1995 Brent Spar campaign, which supplied another PR disaster for science and the press. Greenpeace's overestimation of waste oil (5,500 tons) stored in a decommissioned Shell storage buoy (actually 10 tons) was a woeful miscalculation. It tarnished Greenpeace's reputation and demonstrates Goodbody's point regarding the fallibilities of "science" and the press. Though I'd like to interject that, yes, when Greenpeace apologized to Shell for overestimating the tonnage, the apology upped the ante

for skeptics. But the campaign prevented a precedent that would have allowed deep-water disposal in the North Sea of *all* redundant oil storage buoys. Shell, the UK government, the European signatories of the Oslo convention, did not object to these "best practices." Until the Greenpeace protest. From this, "many corporate social responsibility and accountability practices emerged" (Kuszewski and Crowther).

My interjection offers a more positive outcome than the text suggests, and Goodbody admits to the existence of a "strong German strain of cultural pessimism" (101). Pessimism gave rise to the literature of alarmism, typified by Frank Schätzing's *Der Schwarm* (2004), although Goodbody cites Anton-Andreas Guha's *The Planet Strikes Back* (1993) as Germany's first explicit climate change work (101). Three other critical positions of discontent include 1) Michael Schneider's riposte to catastrophism and the eco-pessimists in "Apocalypse, Politics or Psychosis and the Playboys of Doom" (n.d.); 2) Ulrich Horstmann's *The Monster* (1983), in which humans are inherently self-destructive, but allowing the cheerful insight that a nuclear winter would enable Earth (*ohne Menschlichkeit*) to return to its former pristine beauty (102); and lastly, 3) the disillusioned Greens. The influential duo, Dirk Maxeiner and Michael Miersch, editors of *Natur* (*sic*) saw the Greens as driven by "missionary zeal" (105) rather than critical enquiry.

It is from this group of green skeptics that the climate sceptics emerged, taking issue with the IPCC's and Al Gore's joint Nobel Peace Prize, and the IPCC's public loss of trust with its emphasis on Al Gore's over-simplified hockey stick curve. Skeptics and retired scientists took to the internet interrogating the veracity of climate models and data. The result (according to blogger Hans von Storch) being that "the scientific and political establishment [came to] recognize that climate science is 'post-normal,' in the sense of being characterized by uncertainty of knowledge" (113).

Goodbody discusses blogging, newspapers, and journal articles along with four genre novels chosen for ecocritical enquiry. These are Sonja Margolina's thriller *Glacial Period* (2013), Nele Neuhaus's crime novel *Those Who Sow Wind* (2011), and Sven Böttcher's science thriller *Prophecy* (2011). Sustained attention is given to Christian Kracht's and Ingo Niermann's *Methane* (2007), a satirical postmodern pastiche that proposes accelerating global warming in order to methanize the earth's atmosphere. By increasing methane—a greenhouse gas produced in the intestinal tracks of the ever-increasing human population and the cattle they consume—oxygen, water, organic life, humans, will be replaced by "a new, more intelligent species" whose physiology is compatible with the changed atmosphere (methane). So readers don't miss the Aryan parody, the

jacket is printed in Gothic typeface, a kind associated with neo-Nazi groups (126). Grappling for words to describe the work, Goodbody's admiration for this "unique contribution to the literature of climate scepticism" (128) is irrepressible: *Methane* is a spoof; a variant of Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis; a satire—indeed, a "bewildering piece" (127). Constructing meaning from the pastiche, Goodbody reads methane as "a metaphor for global capitalism, touristic consumption, military-industrial destruction of the environment, the dissolution of democratic structures and moral degeneration" (127). Or, as he puts it "Farting our way into extinction" (128).

United States: Climate, Christians, and Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* pp. 134-173[3]

Read George Handley's chapter "Climate Scepticism and Christian Conservation in the United States" out of order. Read it after the European chapters. Readers are likely more media-familiar with the climate politics of the United States, either through one-time presidential hopeful, Democrat Al Gore, and his DVD lecture *An Inconvenient Truth*, or because of the November 2020 official withdrawal of the United States (read Donald Trump, Republican) from the Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. Unlike in France, environmentalism and climate change issues in the US represent partisan polarization to a fault. Perhaps because the politics of self-interest, American exceptionalism, and free-market capitalism, play so large a part in climate discussions, climate skepticism has been "the object of more academic attention than in any other country" (133), its leading scholar being Naomi Oreskes (184).

Handley traces the origins of skepticism discourses to the Cold War, the country's affirmation of Christian values, and the right to use technology "to liberate humankind from the contingencies of nature" (133). Democrats (seen as liberal) and their policies (seen as threatening Republican conservative values) come up against conservative think tanks (CTT) financed by companies including the fossil fuel industries. Cable news and talk radio are credited with stoking climate skepticism and helping make it central to the Republican platform. Syndicated Op-Eds fuel middle-class anxieties by citing the costs of climate change mitigation and the necessity of collective action which, in turn, is seen as a threat to individual freedoms.

[3] Unless otherwise indicated pages numbers are from George Handley's chapter "Climate Scepticism and Christian Consevation in the United States" in CCS.

Remarkably, the notion of a conflict of interest seems poorly understood in the USA. Handley takes us through the appointment of Chris Horner, author of *Red Hot Lies: How Global Warming Alarmists Use Threats, Fraud, and Deception to Keep You Misinformed* (2008). Horner was appointed to Trump's Environmental Protection Agency transition team, even though he is a member of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, funded by the fossil fuel industry. Take Marc Morano, founder of the Web site "ClimateDepot" that promotes climate change dissent; he's the writer and narrator of *Climate Hustle* (2016) funded by the fossil fuel industry, and one-time aide to Rush Limbaugh (skeptic, radio host). All this media access provides ample opportunity to broadcast the skeptics' narrative, keeping in mind George Marshall's findings that "people will hang on to a compelling story even in the face of directly contradictory factual evidence" (106 qtd. in Garrard 80).

Then there's James Inhofe (Republican senator, remembered for throwing a snowball on the senate floor to refute global warming), author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Climate Change* (2018). It's A Boy's Own club. With the US having "one of the most religious populations among developed nations," and with "conservative Christians show[ing] the highest rates of climate scepticism" (137) it's no revelation that the US is the world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases (139). Citing Dan Kahan's research on the importance of cultural identity "as a predictor of attitudes about climate change" (138), Handley warns against stereotyping, noting so long as climate change is dressed in the garb of Al Gore and leans toward large-government solutions, "climate change is a non-starter" (142).

Nevertheless, when climate warmists such as Pope Francis and Katherine Hayhoe (scientist and Evangelical) identify *Christian* reasons to care, "climate action on the part of Christians becomes a greater possibility" (142). Handley notes that the Evangelical Environmental Network site, for example, focusses on "Creation Care" (140). When I searched for the reference, I was amused to read that "Trump's Environmental Speech" was received with a riposte from Proverbs 12.22: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord"; and its response to the resignation of Bill Wehrum, previously Trump's EPA air quality official, is succinct: "Praise God."

Handley's chapter primarily discusses Inhofe, and critiques Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* (2004). Inhofe's *The Global Warming Hoax* (2012) exemplifies social identity problematics, explicitly trusting the "known" Christian conservative community rather than outsiders like the United Nations. Inhofe and Sarah Palin (TV host, and Republican nominee for Vice President in 2008) claim climate change is a "theological impossibility" (145), quoting Genesis 8:22: "As

long as the earth remains, / there will be springtime and harvest, / cold and heat, winter and summer, / day and night." (This is rendered apocalyptic when read alongside Ulrich Horstmann's *The Monster* where earth is returned to its pristine state following a human-instigated nuclear winter (Goodbody 102)).

This is not a reading Inhofe would endorse; his ideology promotes confidence in human nature doing the right thing (147). It's a nice idea, says Handley, but not one supported either by the "response sceptics" who doubt that human nature is capable of responding to climate change with anything but unconcern (CCS 34, 67), or in Tommy Mitchell's video "A God of Suffering?" which holds there are no innocent people due to Adam's fall (151), nor by Derrick Jensen's *Endgame* (2011) where civilization itself is rotten (152). How then to communicate climate problems to Christian conservatives of Inhofe's ilk if "Human fate is in God's hands"? (155). Handley suggests that "human beings cannot in fact be so trusted" and that as a form of voluntary self-restraint, democratically chosen regulations should be pursued (147). But as "climate change [is seen] as a direct threat to the authority of Christianity" (155) we see why Christian conservatives took to Michael Crichton's novel. It isn't religious and it isn't about climate change; it resorts to stereotypes of fear-mongering environmentalists—the "pseudo-religious fanatics" (163) who endanger the public in their obsessive attempts to prove a point.

Referring to Crichton as "the Rachel Carson of climate scepticism" (156) Handley spends almost fifteen pages discussing *State of Fear*. This "wildly implausible conspiracist fantasy" (163), complete with footnotes and graphs, earned Crichton a meeting with then President Bush and a number one place on the *New York Times* list, which, even when *Nature* and the Union for Concerned Scientists criticized it for its poor use of science, exemplifies Marshall's "psychological evidence that people will hang on to a compelling story even in the face of directly contradictory factual evidence" (*CCS* 80).

Nevertheless, trusting in the earth's history of assault and recovery, Crichton syncs with Christian conservatives' belief that it's all up to the tough love of divine providence. Which is what leaves them in a state of fear: they can do nothing. In the novel, the environmentalists instigate ecological orders regimenting freedom. First wave ecocritics will recognize early simplistic understandings of environmentalism without ecology as voiced by the character Ted Bradley who speaks about "the balance of nature." His counterpoint, John Kenner, a law enforcement agent intent on bringing down the eco-terrorist society ELF, possesses the crushing capacity to out-knowledge every warmist who totters into his path. His worldview is Hobbesian, a tooth and nail planet, honed by millions of years of evolutionary violence. Bradley's Edenic outlook sees him

consumed, literally, by his ideology when faced by a dark ecology inhabited by cannibals.

Handley concedes that Christianity is not necessarily incompatible with climate science (171). His view is that Christianity's defensiveness results from being a social identity under threat in the (Godless) age of the Anthropocene; its traditions lack the resources to respond to such an age. Of all the chapters, Handley's has the least optimistic outcome despite the Leiserowitz chart showing only 9% of Americans fall into the "Dismissive" category regarding climate change (143). But placed alongside the fact "that climate scepticism is a central tenet of the Republican Party" and that "political affiliation has more influence on attitudes about climate change than any other factor" (Dugan 2005 qtd. in *CCS* 144), the 9% is hopelessly misleading. Handley's conclusion regarding American skepticism is that it is "tedious, repetitive, predictable and paranoid" (179).

Environmentalists Need to Lighten Up

The final two chapters, "Science and Technology Studies, Ecocriticism and Climate Change " (Garrard et al. pp. 208-223) and "What We've Learned from Climate Sceptics" (Garrard et. al. pp. 225-244), summarize and reflect on culturally embedded skeptical texts and their place in the global space that is climate change. Claiming that climate change is a given in ecocriticism, and that ecocriticism seeks to "raise awareness and deepen consciousness of climatic risks" (207), the authors hope to "nudge" ecocriticism in new directions, particularly toward Science and Technology Studies (STS). STS is the study of how politics, society, and culture affect scientific research, and vice versa. Its principal theorist is Bruno Latour. Unlike "scientism" it doesn't pretend that it is possible to separate facts from values; STS thereby antagonizes "pure science" skeptics. Climate change science comes closer to "post-normal science" where "facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent" (Funtowicz and Ravetz 744 qtd. in *CCS* 217). The aim is for ecocriticism to accept climate change skepticism as an opportunity to reconsider "its relationship with teaching, activism and environmental science" (223).

In "What We've Learned from Climate Sceptics" we discover that "Environmentalists hate fun" (225): they focus on negativity and sacrifice, and could learn something from the "smiling ecology" of the *Génération Cobaye* in France (226). Under the sub-section "The puzzle of sceptical literature" the authors ask how the portrayal of science as a social discourse differs in skeptical fiction and

non-fiction. For instance, how does the "horizon of expectation" differ amongst the readership of the different countries? And, interestingly, "why are virtually all of the sceptical writers, in all four countries, men?" (243).

Importantly, despite the methodologies designed to engage skeptics and warmists, and the belief in the transformative potential of literary study, the authors end on a downbeat "what if" note. What if empathetic attempts to dialogue with climate skeptics (combined with IPCC conservativism) simply delay action and lead to catastrophe?

There is a backstop. A "talk the talk, walk the walk" approach recognizes different timeframes. Textbooks need to be bought (or, as with this text, put online), read, and taught. It takes time. The "Extinction Rebellion" protests that opened this overview resulted in global attention and a five-fold increase in internet searches for "climate change" (Cowell, *The Independent* 26 April 2019). Since the publication of *Climate Change Scepticism*, the world has experienced the largest climate protests in history, with youth organizations such as Schools Strike for 4 Climate (SS4C) demonstrating before the United Nations conference in New York (Taylor and Bartlett, *The Guardian* 27 September 2019).

So rapidly has the youth climate movement taken off and the "horizon of expectation" shifted that you won't find "Greta Thunberg" in the book's index. Because this is a pre-Covid-19 book, neither will you find reference to the Great Pause that enabled the Earth a respite—and perhaps gave attribution skeptics (those who question the attributed source of climate change) their own pause for thought.

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